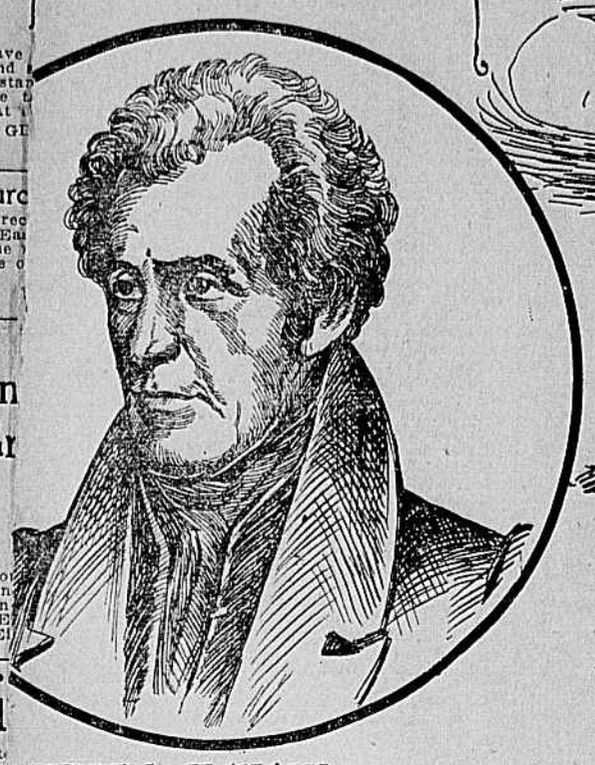
REW JACKSON—GREATEST OF MILITIA CHIEFTAINS



ANDREW JACKSON.

THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

SPILLANE.

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father, a poor Irish farmer, scraped out a living as best he could from a few rented acres in Carrickfergus. His mother was a weaver. With their two sons, Hugh and Robert, the husband and wife came to America in 1765 and settled in the northwestern corner of the South Carolina. There they cleared a field, built a log cabin and raised a crop. Then the father died. The widow never returned to the cabin. From the grave in which her husband was laid she went with her two little boys to the home of a relative a few dozen yards across the line in North Corolina, and there, a few nights after the funeral, Andrew Jackson was born. He lived and died believing he was born in South Carolina, but to North Carolina belongs the honor. What early education he received was such as the wandering schoolmaster of the frontier settlements imparted. He never was much of a lover of books, and although he wrote strongly and well, his spelling was away below par.

He was thirteen when Tarleton surprised a detachment of the frontier militia, killing more than 100 men and wounding 150. Some of the wounded were cared for by Mrs. Jackson. The story of that massacre, as they got it from the wounded men, fired the hearts of the Jackson boys. Hugh, the eldest, enlisted in the company of Colonel Davie and died of exhaustion after the battle of Stono. Robert and Andrew were at the battle of Hanging Rock, where Sumter, after winning a gallant victory, lost it through his men drinking too much of the rum captured in the British camp. Then for a few months the two boys were engaged in that wretched partisan warfare that spread desolation through the South, when Whig and Tory neighbors fought like wolves. Through overconfidence the band of which the boys were members were surprised by force and the two lads were made prisoness. A British officer ordered Andrew to clean his boots and when the boy refused the officer truchk at him with his sword. To protect his head the boy threw up his left arm. The sword cut his head and arm, and he carried the scars to his grave.

No Wonder He Hated the English.

Next the officer ordered Robert Jackson to clean the boots. He too, refused. Again the sword was used and the elder brother was felled bleeding and senseless. To Camden, forty miles distant, the two wounded boys were taken. How brutal their captors were may be imagined from th fact that in the long journey no food was allowed to the brothers, and when streams were forded they were not permitted to drink, although they were in a fever from their wounds. In Camden they were put into a wretched, filthy hole with 250 other unfortunates. Soon smallpox developed and both boys contracted the disease. Dead and dying were left together. Out of this horror Mrs. Jackson took them when an exchange of prisoners was arranged, and started home. She had only one horse. On this Robert was lifted. The mother held him secure, while Andrew walked alongside bareheaded, barefooted and half dead. Through storm and sunshine they crept along. Two days after reaching home Robert died. Andrew was an invalid for months. Then the mother died and Andrew Jackson, less than fifteen years old, was alone in the world. No wonder he hated the English. The bitterness of that most tragic period of his life he never forgot or forgave.

How he lived for the next few years is not known. There is a tradition that he served for a time as schoolmaster. Hard must have been the lot of army pupils of that hot-tempered youth. Tradition has it, too, that when he took a short course in Queen's College at Charlotte the tail of his shirt flirted out of holes in his trousers, so ragged was he. When he was nineteen he began to study law and when he was twenty-three he went over the mountains into what now is Tennessee, his friend John McNairy, having been appointed a Judge and young Jackson having been made Solicitor-General or prosecuting attorney for the whole region, with headquarters at Nashville.

If there was one office in the whole territory that was hazardous it was that of Solicitor-General. There were a god many wild characters in that new country and they considered any one who prosecuted them in criminal cases or acted for the other side in civil cases as a personal enemy. Every one went armed. A session of court rarely ended without an encounter if not a killing. It required a brave man to act as prosecuting attorney. It was not long before Jackson was not only feared, but respected. Every one knew he would fight.

He was very tall and very thin, but remarkably strong. He had a passion, too, to make headway in the world. Out of his earnings he bought land and laid the basis for a large estate. Then he fell in love. He had lived for a short time in the home of the Widow Donelson, whose daughter Rachel had been deserted by her husband, Lewis Robards. From Virginia, whither Robards had gone, came a printed report that Robards had obtained a divorce. Accepting the report as true, Jackson and Rachel Robards married. Months after their marriage Robards returned to Nashville. Then it was discovered that at the time of Jackson's marriage the divorce decree had not been granted, but it had been issued shortly before Robards left Virginia. Jackson and his wife were remarried at once, but thereafter Jackson's political enemies used this affair to discredit him, torturing and twisting the facts in the most malign way and never failing to drive him to frenzy.

Duels.

As Tennessee grew Jackson prospered. When the State was admitted to the Union in 1796, he owned more than 30,000 acres of land and had established his famous home, the Hermitage. Tennessee was entitled to but one member of the House of Representatives, and in the first Federal election Jackson was sent to Congress. The following year, there being a vacancy in the Senate, he became United States Senator, but he resigned the office in a few months and was elected Justice of the Supreme Court of Tennessee. He retained the Justiceship six years, but they were not without strife. Once he got into a bitter contest with John Sevier, the noted Nolichucky Jack, who was the father of Tennessee and its first Governor. Each aspired to the major-generalship of the militia, and Jackson won. It was not an empty honor, for the Indians were troublesome. Sevier was the greatest Indian fighter America ever has known, and to be defeated by a young and inexperienced man was a sore blow to the old warrior.

Mrs. Jackson managed the farm and was remarkably successful. General Jackson devoted his attention to the bench and politics. As a side line he bought one of the greatest race-horses of the day—Trnxton—and raced him against the best the West could furnish. Out of a match between Truxton and Ploughboy developed the duel with Charles Dickinson. Dickinson was one of the handsomest men in the State, wild and dissipated, and the best shot in Tennessee. He was opposed to Jackson, and smarting under his losses on Ploughboy, he made remarks in a tavern affecting Mrs. Jackson. When Jackson called him to account he apologized saying he had been intoxicated and had no knowledge of what he said. Again while in liquor Dickinson used offensive terms. Again there were explanations. Next one of Dickinson's friends assailed Jackson, bringing Dickinson into the affair as authority for his statement. Jackson thereupon branded Dickinsonas a poltroon, and Dickinson replied by calling Jackson a coward afraid to meet him on the field of honor. Dueling was common and Jackson promptly challenged Dickinson.

The place for the meeting was about forty miles from Nashville. On the way to the dueling ground Dickinson amused himself by giving brilliant exhibitions of his skill with the pistol, leaving instructions to have Jackson informed of his work when he came along.

But this did not effect Jackson's composure. "He didn't have a man with a pistol in front of him when he shot at that mark, did he?" he would ask.

Jackson had determined to let Dickinson have the first shot. They met in a clearing in a poplar forest. General Overton, Jackson's second, was to give the order to fire. When the men took position Overton called: "Are you ready?"

"I am ready," replied Dickinson.

"Ready," said Jackson.

"Fire!" shouted Overton.

Dickinson raised his pistol quickly and fired. Jackson stood unmoved. Slowly Jackson raised his pistol. Dickinson looked at the menacing figure before him and then crying, "My God! have I missed him?" went pale all of a sudden and stepped back a pace or two.

"Back to the mark!" yelled Overton. Overton with downcast eyes stepped forward. Jackson took deliberate aim and pulled the trigger, but something was wrong. The trigger had stopped at half cock. Slowly and carefully he readjusted the trigger. Then he took aim again. Then he fired. Dickinson reeled and fell, mortally wounded.

Jackson walked a hundred yards off, where Overton soon joined him. They walked about for a minute, or two and then Overton, in looking down, saw that Jackson's boot was full of blood. Dickinson's bullet had broken two ribs and ripped along the breastbone, but the man of iron had concealed the fact that he had been hit. He was taken to a house near by and the wound dressed, but he insisted Dickinson should not know he was wounded.

Dickinson bled to death. Jackson was unable to be out for a month.

Seven years later, when the War of

Crippled for Life.

1812, was at its height, came the duel with the Bentons. Jackson had been drawn into a quarrel with Jesse Benton, brother of Thomas H. Benton. The quarrel was altogether absurd, for Thomas Benton and Jackson were warm friends, but meddlers inflamed the minds of the men until Jackson announced he would horsewhip Thomas Benton on sight.

They met near the City Hotel in Nashville. Jackson had a whip in his hand. As Jackson approached Benton reached in his breast pocket for a pistol. Jackson was quicker, and before Benton could draw, Jackson had a pistol at his breast. Benton stepped back and fell down the cellar steps of the hotel. This was ludicrous, but as Jackson was turning away disgusted Jesse Benton blazed at him from behind. His pistol had a charge of two bullets and a large slug. The slug shattered Jackson's left shoulder. One of the balls ripped his arm open. The other ball entered the left side and pierced the lung.

While he was in bed suffering from these fearful wounds news came of the Fort Mimms massacre, where 400 men, women and children were butchered by the Creeks. No one supposed Jackson would be able to rise from his bed to lead the Tennessee militia that were hastily called to avenge the tragedy, but he did. He had to be lifted on a horse. His left arm was in a sling. Never again could he bear the weight of so much as an epaulet on his left shoulder. He not only was crippled for life, but any unguarded movement was agonizing. Riding horseback it was necessary for him to have a sort of cradle rigged in front of him on which to lean. The wound in the lung never healed.

For the remainder of his life he could not sit in a chair for five minutes without support. Usually he sat astraddle, so he could put his arms over the back. Never, perhaps, did a more sorely stricken man go to lead a campaign. He was more fitted for a hospital than the field, yet so remarkable was his will that at times he disregarded his injuries and tore around as if he were in his full strength. But the reaction would be fearful.

If ever a man showed magnificent courage and ability surely Jackson did in that campaign. His supplies went astray and his men were left starving. They mutinied. He cajoled and threatened. Company after company tried to desert. With such as remained faithful he drove the rebellious back. But the men became so weak at last that he could go no further. Mutiny spread until it seemed the expedition would end in disaster, but Jackson never relaxed. He held that starving horde together, until at last supplies and reinforcements arrived. Then in a series of brilliant moves, culminating in the battle of Horseshoe Bend, he crushed the Creeks and ended the Indian war. Next he drove the British out of Mobile and came within an ace of penning up a British fleet in Pensacola. He figured correctly that the next move of the British would be against New Orleans. That city practically was without defense. A great British fleet had assembled at Jamaica preparatory to a descent upon the Mississippi.

New Orleans.

On the 1st of December, 1814, accompanied only by his staff, he arrived in New Orleans from Mobile. Within a few days he had drawn plans for the defense of the city and had inspected all its approaches. His force from Mobile arrived and he had 3,000 men. Nearly as many more were en route from Tennessee, but when they were to arrive he was to find that few of them were armed and New Orleans had little with which to equip them.

Fifty British ships arrived at the entrance to Lake Borgue early in December. Jackson had been none too soon. With rare skill the British managed to mask their operations, land a large body of troops and get within eight miles of New Orleans before their movements were discovered. Word reached Jackson on the afternoon of December 23 of the discovery of the enemy. That night he struck. Down the Mississippi went a little gunboat, the Carolina, and over the swamps and fields went a picked body of Louisianans and Tennesseeans. The British were to be treated a new style of warfare, something the Americans had learned from the Indians—a night attack.

It was the advance guard of the British that Jackson attacked. The guns of the Carolina were to give the signal. The Carolina opened too early to make the attack wholly successful and the night was too dark for the opposing forces to distinguish friend from foe, but the suddenness of the attack, the spirit of the Americans and the injury inflicted led the British to draw back and hesitate before making any further forward movement.

It was little more than a skirmish, but it produced delay, and time was everything to Jackson, for he had only 3,000 men to oppose the great force of the enemy. Delay made it possible for him to throw up breastworks, to deepen and widen the Rodriguez canal and to place a barrier between him and the British that was to prove their ruin.

The British, cautious from their previous experience, took advantage of the darkness of night to establish batteries, intending to shell the Americans, and under cover of the artillery fire rush the infantry and rout the defenders from behind their breastworks. Big guns had been brought up from the ships. Jackson, too, established batteries. In the duel between the big guns the British made a frontal attack. Alas! for the trained veterans of Britain's great and victorious army. They could not withstand the fire of the American sharpshooters and had to retire. And when the smoke raised, after the big guns of the batteries ceased firing, it was discovered that every British battery had been destroyed. The British had used hogsheads or sugar and hogsheads of molasses to protect the batteries. The American balls had gone through them as if they were paper and had spread the sticky mass broadcast until the men in the batteries were floundering, slipping and sliding helplessly about.

One thing the British did do. They managed to destroy the Carolina, but that was all.

Although checked, the British were not content. General Sir Edward Packenham, brother-in-law of Wellington, and one of England's great soldiers, had arrived and taken command. He planned to storm the American works, and while storming them to send a force up the west side of the river, capture the city and attack the Americans in the rear. An excellent plan, but badly executed. On January 8 he led the storming party, while Colonel Thornton made the advance on the western side.

The battle of New Orleans lasted only twenty-five minutes. In those twenty-five minutes regiment after regiment of British troops went into the jaws of death and the jaws closed down upon them. As they neared the American lines the men behind the breastworks mowed them down. Gallantly the British closed the gaps in their ranks, gallantly they kept on, but men could not stand before the rain of bullets that came upon them, and at last they turned and fled. Then another and another column advanced, but only to add to the slaughter. Packenham fell.

General Gibbs fell. Generals, colonels, majors and captains fell until there were few officers left to command the men. Of 6,000 men sent into action 700 were killed, 1,400 wounded and 500 taken prisoners. And the Americans los tonly eight killed and thirteen wounded.

There was only one blot on the wonderful victory. The force sent to oppose Thornton fled at the first fire. Had Thornton been earlier and his force been larger he might have reached New Orleans.

The British were permitted to retreat to their ships without interference. Jackson's force was too small to risk an engagement except under conditions of his own selection. He had done enough. With militiamen he had defeated the conquerors of Napoleon. He held New Orleans under martial law until he got official notification of the signing of the Treaty of Ghent—the treaty that was signed long before the battle of New Orleans was fought.

The messenger from Washington sent to advise him of the treaty signing broke all records on the trip, making the thirty-day journey in nineteen days, and then delivered a paper of no importance, having in his haste picked up the wrong packet in departing. Because Jackson put a judge in jail who, chafing under the harshness of martial law, issued a writ of habeas corpus which the General ignored, the hero of New Orleans was arrested a month after his victory and fined $1,000.

Court orders were trivial to the irascible soldier. So, too, were other things when in the Seminole war he went into Spanish territory in Florida, took possession temporarily and hanged Arbuthnot and Armister as British spies. One of them, no doubt, was guilty, the other not, but Jackson saw the hand of England in everything done to aid or comfort the renegade Indians.

Jackson might be harsh and might err grievously at times, but to the people he was a glorious figure. In the presidential campaign of 1824 he unquestionably was entitled to the presidency, but by a combination between Clay and John Quincy Adams Congress selected Adams when the issue was left to Congress to decide.

There could be no such deal four years later. Then he was elected by an overwhelming majority, and again four years later. He was not a great statesman, but he was a good President and few men left a greater impress on his time. Never did he lose the affections of the people. He was able to choose his successor, Martin Van Buren, and had much to do with the selection of Polk to follow Van Buren.

When he retired from the presidency he had only $70 in the world aside from a few hundred acres of his once big estate. Several times he met financial reverses. He never was known to weep but twice, once when his wife died and once when an old friend to whom he applied for a loan of $10,000 sent the money and tried as delicately as he could to get the old soldier to accept it as a gift.

Sturdy and unbending he retained his marvelous will power to the end. He was but a shell when the summons came, one lung being gone completely and only a portion of the other remaining. Perhaps nothing in all his career was more wonderful than his hold on life, for although he bled from the lungs every day for years, although he was thin almost to emaciation, he lived to be more than seventy-seven.